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Lambda Letters Project

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Board Member Shears Locks for Love, Pledges

By Joy Fisher

The holiday season may be over but the spirit of giving is still in the air, at least around Paul Furth.

As a San Diego member of the Lambda Letters board of directors, Paul is bringing a long personal project to its culmination this month when he will have his three-and-a-half-year growth of hair shorn for donation to an organization that provides hairpieces to disadvantaged children.

Paul started his project after his work as a medicinal chemist into therapies for cancer gave him an understanding of the side-effects that chemotherapy can have on patients, including the loss of their hair.

When he started his project, Paul didn't have a particular organization in mind to receive his donation until a woman he knew suggested Locks of Love. This nonprofit organization provides hairpieces to financially disadvantaged children 18 years of age or younger in the US and Canada who suffer from long-term medical hair loss.

The organization requires the donated hair to be at least 10 inches long. Paul's is considerably longer than that, reaching to the

Continued on page 8

LLP Starts New Economic Issue Topic

By Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

For most of its history the Lambda Letters Project has focused on legislation relating to four issue areas: HIV/AIDS issues, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/intersex issues, issues of concern to people of color, and women's issues.

Recently it has become increasingly apparent that many bills we covered under the people of color banner had more to do with economic justice rather than strictly race or ethnicity issues. In other words, these bills had more to do with being poor than being a person of color.

Beginning with this issue, we will feature five bills in each month's newsletter, and we will enclose five letters for you to consider signing. The letters and articles will relate to the original four issues and a new, fifth economic issue (see page 3).

Similarly, the bill list appearing in each newsletter, and on our web page, will be divided among the five issue areas. We hope you will like this new arrangement. We also hope it will sharpen our focus on both people of color issues and economic issues, and help us to be more effective on both of them.

Pat Washington *v.* SDSU: An Update

By Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

Pat Washington was hired as the first black tenure-track faculty member of the Women's Studies Department at San Diego State University (SDSU) in August, 1996.

Despite being named Teacher of the Year for three consecutive years; winning dozens of awards for teaching and service to students and the community; presenting at local, state, and international academic and related conferences; and being widely published, she was denied tenure and promotion and fired from the university in 2003.

Washington exhausted all administrative remedies, including participating in the California Faculty Association arbitration process. She filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) for race and gender discrimination combined and retaliation.

After a 14-month investigation, the EEOC "found reasonable cause" that Washington had been discriminated against and was retaliated against for complaining about her experiences.

The EEOC urged the university to reinstate Washington immediately with full back pay, benefits, tenure, and promotion to

Continued on page 9

Also in This Newsletter

Economics Issue 3
HIV/AIDS Issue 3–4
People of Color Issue 3
LGBTI Issue 4
Women's Issue 4
January Legislative Update 5–6
LGBTI News You Can Use 7
People of Color Bills Now Law 9

Lambda Letters Progress Report

Letters and Messages Collected

November, 2005	2,193 letters & e-mails
In all of 2005	355,649 letters & e-mails

Dollars Spent

October, 2005	$3,714
In all of 2005	$43,047

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

Lambda Letters Project

Our Mission

To promote the social, economic, and human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals, couples, and families; people affected by HIV/AIDS; people of color; and women. We do this by urging elected officials to enact and support legislation that accomplishes this goal.

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Discrimination Complaints

Have you experienced employment discrimination because of your actual or perceived sexual orientation or because of your age (40 and over), ancestry, color, creed, disability, marital status, medical condition, national origin, race, religion, or sex? Have you been denied family and medical care leave or pregnancy disability leave? If so, you may register a complaint with the Department of Fair Employment and Housing. In cases of employment discrimination, call the department at (800) 884-1684. In cases of housing discrimination, call (800) 233-3212. The person answering the phone will schedule an appointment for you at the Department of Fair Employment and Housing Office which is closest to your home or place of employment.

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Economic Issue

Support Death Penalty Moratorium

By Shirin Buckman, Legislative Analyst

AB 1121 by Paul Koretz (D–West Hollywood) and Sally Lieber (D–Mountain View) asks the California Legislature to review application of the death penalty in capital cases.

If passed, AB 1121 would establish the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice to examine the use of the death penalty and recommend safeguards preventing the execution of innocent or wrongly convicted inmates. It would also stop all executions in California until the Legislature has fully considered any recommendations of the Commission and has enacted legislation ending the moratorium. However, if the Legislature fails to end *or* extend the moratorium period, the moratorium will end on January 1, 2009.

The application of the death penalty violates Eighth Amendment safeguards against "cruel and unusual punishment." As held by Justice Brennan in *Furman v. Georgia*, capital punishment is degrading to human dignity and is excessive and unnecessary government-sanctioned punishment.

The death penalty is an inhumane, irrevocable sentence that does not deter violent crime. Between 1967 and 1991, when there were no executions in California, murder rates rose 17 percent. Conversely, in Texas, a state that heavily relies on the death penalty, the murder rate rose 41 percent. There is no evidence proving that capital punishment deters crime.

Nationally, increasing numbers of death row inmates have later been found innocent of the crime for which they were convicted. In California, one-third of death row inmates have no lawyer of their own. Due to the lengthy and expensive appeals process, a death penalty sentence costs more than incarcerating an inmate for life. California would save $90 million per year if it were to abolish death sentences.

Please act to save innocent people from a wrongful death by the state. Write to your Assemblymembers in support of this important bill.

Ask them to support AB 1121.

HIV/AIDS Issue

Promote HIV/AIDS Education Among Women

By Joy Fisher, Legislative Analyst

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in 2003 that women accounted for a staggering 26 percent of all new HIV and AIDS cases, with African-American and Hispanic women accounting for 83 percent of those diagnosed. Heterosexual sex has been the primary method of HIV exposure for women, and a growing number are becoming infected by male partners who participate in high-risk behavior.

For many reasons, fewer women seek care, especially in communities where social and cultural norms may discourage women from speaking out about their sexuality. In some cultures, the promiscuous behavior of male partners is ignored; in others, seeking assistance brings fear of being stigmatized. As a result, women often fail to recognize early symptoms of HIV/AIDS and do not raise questions—even with their doctors.

Existing law requires doctors who provide perinatal care to pregnant women to obtain a blood sample to be tested for HIV/AIDS unless the woman opts out of the test. However, existing law does not even require doctors to give information about HIV/AIDS to women who are not pregnant.

Assembly Bill 568 by Bonnie Garcia (R–El Centro) would require doctors to provide their female patients with information about HIV/AIDS at the time they sign in for an annual gynecological examination or family planning appointment. In addition, under the current wording of AB 568, women would have to be offered the option of being tested for HIV/AIDS on a form that would require them to accept or decline the test. Testing would not be mandatory. If the woman accepted testing, the attending doctor would be required to obtain a specimen and submit it to a licensed clinical laboratory for testing for HIV/AIDS.

Once the results were received, the attending doctor would have to ensure that the patient received the information and appropriate counseling to explain the results and the implications for the woman's health. If

Continued on page 4

People of Color Issue

Create Safer Environments for Communities of Color

By Marty Martinez, Legislative Analyst

Some popular brands of shampoo, deodorant, face cream, and other everyday products contain chemicals that research has linked to cancer and birth defects.

This is a particularly important issue for babies because of exposure to such chemicals *in utero.*

It is also important for children, adolescents, and workers in salons, many of whom are people of color. Their constant exposure to these chemicals raises serious health concerns.

Phthalates, the chemicals used in some cosmetics, have been banned by the European Union. There is an effort in California to ban the same types of phthalates that the European Union did. It would be the first ever phthalate ban in the United States.

As has been shown by the European Union ban, it is possible to manufacture personal care products without these harmful ingredients.

AB 908 by Assemblywoman Judy Chu (D–Monterey Park) phases out two types of phthalates from personal care products.

These are two chemicals that have been linked to birth defects and cancer. Industry efforts are fighting to keep this proposal from becoming law.

Currently the bill is stalled in the Assembly Health Committee. We must make our voices heard so that we can make a difference. Workers and consumers have been exposed to these hazards for far too long.

Please take a minute to write Assemblywoman Wilma Chan (D–Oakland), Chair of the Assembly Health Committee, in support of this important bill that will assure the safety of products better for workers' and consumers' health.

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LGBTI Issue

Please Help Young People in Trouble

By Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

This month we ask that you write to the Assembly in support of AB 1501 (Leland Yee, D–San Francisco). This bill would require the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, and the City and County of San Francisco to establish a streamlined, coordinated set of procedures to address the needs of minors who have been arrested for prostitution. The bill would also require those counties to establish memoranda of understanding between the counties to coordinate services to be provided to minors who are transferred from one county to another.

Why is this important? Youth prostitution is a significant problem, especially in the San Francisco Bay Area. Many of the youthful prostitutes in that area are gay, bisexual, or lesbian.

How does that come to be? Between March 1998 and September 2003, the CyberTipline operated by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children received a total of 1,890 reported cases of child prostitution. The National Network of Runaway and Youth Services has estimated that 20 to 40 percent of youths who become homeless each year are lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Some experts estimate that 26 percent of gay male adolescents are forced to leave home because of their sexual orientation. Many of them gravitate to San Francisco because of its reputation for being gay-friendly. Once they get there, the only way that many of them can support themselves is through prostitution.

Because prostitution is illegal, when these young people are arrested for prostitution they get thrown in jail. But that does not solve the problem. They need services to help them find a better way of living and supporting themselves. That is the fundamental purpose of AB 1501.

Therefore we urge you to write to your member of the Assembly. Urge him or her to make sure this important legislation is approved.

Women's Issue

Respect Gender-Specific Prison Standards for Women

By Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

SB 617 by Jackie Speier (D–San Francisco) would have established the Gender Specific Standards for Women in Prison Task Force. This bill was introduced last year but did not make it out of its house of origin (the state Senate) because it was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Please write to the members of the committee and urge them to approve SB 617.

The bill can still move forward if it is approved by the Senate no later than January 31, 2006. But it will die if it does not get out of the Senate by that date. This is true because a rule of the state legislature sets that deadline for all bills introduced in 2005.

The purpose of the task force defined in the bill would be to evaluate certain conditions in all publicly and privately operated correctional institutions for women, and to report on those conditions to the Secretary of the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency. For instance, the bill would require pregnant inmates to be housed separately and to receive specified care.

This bill is needed because most state prison programs are designed to fit the needs of male inmates. As a result, female inmates' needs are often not met.

This has resulted in inmates being subjected to a sexually abusive environment, unhygienic practices, inadequate medical services, insensitivity to needs of prisoners' children, hostility toward the frail and aged, inappropriate housing assignments, inattention to substance abuse needs, inadequate mental health support, and invasion of privacy from male staff.

In October 2000, the California Joint Committee on Prison Construction and Operations conducted a hearing that brought to light the shocking medical plight of female inmates in California facilities.

For example, inmates from the Central California Women's Facility reported being denied healthcare for serious conditions such as sickle-cell anemia, Hepatitis C, and prenatal healthcare. However, before any action could be taken, the California Joint Committee was disbanded and very little has changed in the healthcare of female prisoners.

Under current law, some less-dangerous female prisoners are transported to and from private facilities to get the medical care they need. This is necessary because the medical care available within prisons is sadly inadequate. However, women sent to these outside services are often shackled. Some women have even been shackled while going through labor.

We are a civilized society. Truly civilized societies treat even criminals with a certain minimum degree of respect. Truly civilized societies require that even criminals in prison receive at least the basic necessities of medical care. Often that is not happening for women in California's prisons.

SB 617 is a good first step in addressing that problem. Please write to the members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Urge them to approve this important bill.

HIV/AIDS Issue

Continued from page 3

she tested positive, she would need to receive a referral whenever possible to a provider or institution providing care for HIV-positive women.

This bill has been stuck in the Assembly Appropriations Committee since May 2005 because it has been determined that there would be significant ongoing costs. For example, if half of the women in CalPERS (an insurance program for state and local government employees) and Medi-Cal received an annual gynecological exam, and one-quarter of those women elected to receive an HIV test, costs would be approximately $6.7 million annually.

The bill's author intends to make one last-ditch effort to get this bill out of Appropriations before the January deadline. Your immediate help is needed to assist in this effort.

Although it may be necessary to amend the bill so that it omits the provision of offering testing for HIV/AIDS—and instead requires only that HIV/AIDS information be given to patients—even this change would provide a valuable service. Please write to the Assembly Appropriations Committee asking members to vote this bill out of committee.

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January Legislative Update

This is now the second year of a two-year state legislative session. Several bills introduced in 2005 did not make it out of their first house before the end of the year. They may have been voted down or they may have been held in a committee in their house of origin without a vote. These bills, still in their house of origin, are called two-year bills.

You can tell which bills in this list are two-year bills by looking at the letters in their bill numbers and at their status. If a bill begins with "AB" and is in an Assembly committee, it is a two-year bill. If a bill begins with "SB" and is in a Senate committee, it is a two-year bill. The Legislature's rules state that two-year bills must be out of their house of origin by January 31 or else they are dead. So most of the action in January will be on these two-year bills.

Authors whose bills were defeated can be granted reconsideration. This means they have permission to ask for a new vote. Bills that were held under submission (meaning they were held back but no vote was taken on them) can also be voted on at the request of the authors. These bills are primarily the ones that will see action in January. Bills that have made it into their second house will see action later in the legislative year.

Here are the bills we are tracking at the moment.

HIV/AIDS Issues

AB 568 (Bonnie Garcia, R–El Centro)
Purpose: To require that any woman seeking an annual gynecological examination or family planning appointment be provided with information on HIV and AIDS, and would require that the woman be offered either the option of being tested onsite, if available, or referral information to other testing locations. If the woman chooses to be tested for HIV, the bill would require the physician and surgeon or other healthcare professional attending the woman at the time the results are received to ensure that the woman receives information and counseling, as appropriate, to explain the results and the implications for the woman's health, including any follow-up care that is indicated.
Status: In the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Hearing postponed by committee. No date for a vote set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 1677 (Paul Koretz, D–West Hollywood)
Purpose: To require state prisons to allow nonprofits or healthcare agencies to distribute condoms and dental dams to prisoners in state prisons.
Status: Sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee. Held under submission. No date for a vote set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

Economics Issues

AB 63 (Audra Strickland, R–Westlake Village)
Purpose: Existing property tax law allows a homeowners' property tax exemption in the amount of $7,000 of the full value of a dwelling, as defined. This bill would, for assessment years beginning on and after January 1, 2006, increase the amount of this property tax exemption to an amount equal to 25% of the full value of a dwelling of qualified purchaser, as defined. This bill would authorize this increased exemption amount for the first five years of a purchaser's eligibility for the exemption, and would, over a five-year period, incrementally decrease the exemption amount to $7,000 of the full value of the dwelling .
Status: In the Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee. Held under submission. Vote set for January 11.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 75 (Dario Frommer, D–Glendale)
Purpose: To establish the California Rx Plus State Pharmacy Assistance Program. The bill would authorize the state to negotiate drug rebate agreements with drug manufacturers to provide program drug discounts. The bill would authorize any licensed pharmacy or drug manufacturer to provide services under the program.
Status: In the Senate Health Committee. Hearing canceled at the request of author. No new date for a vote set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 95 (Paul Koretz, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To establish a program to require manufacturers of drugs for life-threatening chronic conditions that are on the list for Medi-Cal, or the AIDS Drug Assistance Program, to pay the department a rebate equal to the costs of marketing that drug. The bill also would require these manufacturers to disclose to the department all costs incurred in the marketing of the drugs to California consumers and physicians.
Status: In the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Held under submission. No new date for a vote set yet. The author thinks it will probably not get out of the Appropriations Committee.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 503 (Sally Lieber, D–San Jose)
Purpose: To create a CalWORKs Bill of Rights and ensure that each CalWORKs participant receives a copy in his or her primary language.
Status: In the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Held under submission.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 1121 (Paul Koretz, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To enact a moratorium on all death sentences in California until the legislature has fully considered any recommendations of the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice and has enacted legislation ending the moratorium or until January 1, 2009, whichever comes first.
Status: Will be voted on in the Assembly Public Safety Committee on January 10.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 517 (Gloria Romero, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To require the Superintendent of Schools to certify that low-performing high schools must meet minimum conditions necessary for students to successfully pass the high school exit examination. If not, they must submit a report that identifies barriers and actions to address them.
Status: In the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Held under submission. No date for a new vote set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 840 (Sheila Kuehl, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To make all California residents eligible for specified healthcare benefits under the California Health Insurance System. This would, on a single-payer basis, negotiate for or set fees for healthcare services provided through the system and pay claims for those services.
Status: In the Assembly Rules Committee. Awaiting assignment to a new committee after the author introduces legislation to identify a funding source for SB 840.
LLP Position: Support.

LGBTI Issues

AB 628 (Audra Strickland, R–Westlake Village)
Purpose: To provide that the religious or moral beliefs of a person licensed or certified to provide foster care, or of a person applying for licensure or certification to provide foster care, do not render the person ineligible to provide foster care; and that a foster care provider's objection, based upon religious or moral grounds, to the initial or continued placement of a foster youth in the provider's care, do not render the provider ineligible to provide foster care to any other foster youth.
Status: In the Assembly Human Services Committee. Failed passage. Reconsideration granted. Will be voted on January 10.
LLP Position: Oppose.

Continued on page 6

Legislative Update

Continued from page 5

AB 1501 (Leland Yee, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: Existing law establishes conditions and procedures for the treatment of juvenile offenders, as specified. This bill would establish a pilot project, to remain in effect until January 1, 2009, requiring the counties of Alameda and Contra Costa, and the City and County of San Francisco to establish a streamlined and coordinated set of protocols for addressing the needs of minors who have been arrested for prostitution. The bill would also require those counties to develop and implement memoranda of understanding between the counties to coordinate services to be provided to minors who are transferred from one county to another. This bill contains other related provisions and other existing laws.
Status: In the Assembly Public Safety Committee. Will be voted on January 10.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 1005 (Dean Florez, D–Bakersfield)
Purpose: The California Constitution authorizes the exemption from property taxation of the principal residence of a disabled veteran, or a veteran's spouse, when a person has, as a result of a service-connected disease or injury, become disabled or died while on active duty in military service. Existing property tax law specifies an exemption amount of $100,000 but increases that amount to $150,000 if the exemption claimant's income does not exceed $40,000, as adjusted by a specified inflation factor. This bill would, beginning with the lien date for the 2006–7 fiscal year, fully exempt from property taxation the principal residence of the unmarried surviving spouse of a person who died as a result of a service-connected disease or injury. This bill would also, beginning with the lien date for the 2006–7 fiscal year, fully exempt from property taxation the principal residence of the unmarried surviving spouse of a qualified public safety officer who died in the line of duty.
Status: In the Senate Revenue and Tax Committee. Second hearing set. Hearing canceled at the request of author. No new date set for a vote yet.
LLP Position: Support if surviving domestic partners are added.

People of Color Issues

AB 432 (Jenny Oropeza, D–Carson)
Purpose: To extend the time period in which new citizens may register and vote until election day.
Status: In the Senate Elections Committee. Failed passage. Reconsideration granted. No new date set for a vote yet.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 768 (Joseph Simitian, D–Palo Alto)
Purpose: To regulate the use of radio technology in government-issued identification documents. Their inclusion in mass-distributed documents could result in personal data—including names, addresses, immigration status, gender, race, and ethnicity—being scanned without people's knowledge or permission, exposing immigrant and racial/ethnic communities to risks of tracking, profiling, and discriminatory targeting.
Status: Passed the Senate and all needed Assembly committees. In the Assembly Inactive File awaiting a vote on the Assembly floor.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 908 (Judy Chu, D–Monterey Park)
Purpose: To prohibit the manufacture or sale of personal care and beauty products containing two specific phthlates which have been linked to birth defects and cancer. A vast majority of nail salon workers, who are exposed to these chemicals, are Asians and Pacific-Americans.
Status: In the Assembly Health Committee. Hearing cancelled at the request of the author. No new date for a vote set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 930 (Hector De La Torre, D–South Gate)
Purpose: To establish the New California Citizenship Initiative to assist eligible immigrants through the naturalization process and to help them integrate into the economic and civic fabric of our state.
Status: In the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Held under submission. No new date for a vote set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 1068 (Martha Escutia, D–Norwalk)
Purpose: To codify a Telecommunications Bills of Rights, including certain language access protections. For example, this includes the right to receive available *written* contracts and disclosures in the same language as used in the marketing of the product or service.
Status: In the Assembly Utilities and Commerce Committee. Failed passage. Reconsideration granted. No new date for a vote set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

Women's Issues

AB 506 (Cindy Montanez, D–Mission Hills)
Purpose: To establish the Teen Dating Violence Prevention Program, and would require each school district, by an unspecified date, to establish a policy and protocol—including reporting procedures and response requirements—for dealing with teen dating violence in middle and high schools.
Status: In the Assembly Appropriations Committee: Second hearing set. Held under submission. No new date for a vote set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 525 (Judy Chu, D–Monterey Park)
Purpose: Existing law establishes the Access for Infants and Mothers (AIM) Program to provide health insurance coverage for certain eligible persons who pay a subscriber contribution. The AIM Program provides coverage, at a minimum, to subscribers during one pregnancy, and for 60 days thereafter, and to children less than two years of age who were born of a pregnancy covered under this program to a woman enrolled in the program before July 1, 2004. This bill would require the state to request waivers to federal laws and exercise options available under federal law to maximize women's and infant's eligibility for the AIM Program.
Status: In the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Hearing postponed by committee. No new date for a vote set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 617 (Jackie Speier, D–San Mateo)
Purpose: To establish the Gender-Specific Standards for Women in Prison Task Force and charge it with evaluating certain conditions in all publicly and privately operated correctional institutions for women, and reporting on those conditions to the Secretary of the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency. The bill would require pregnant inmates to be housed separately and receive specified care.
Status: In the Senate Appropriations Committee. Held in committee and under submission. No new date for a vote set yet.
LLP Position: Support.

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LGBTI News You Can Use

By Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

Several bills of importance to the LGBTI community became effective on January 1, 2006. Here is an overview of them:

- **AB 378** increases the statute of limitations on hate crimes from one year to three years. This means that victims of hate crimes have up to three years to institute civil court actions against people who committed hate crimes against them. The bill also gives district attorneys, city attorneys, and the California Attorney General three years to press criminal charges against those who commit hate crimes.

- **AB 1400** prohibits businesses from discriminating in the provision of services on the basis of sexual orientation or marital status. If a business refuses to serve you because you are lesbian, gay, or bisexual, they are violating AB 1400. If you experience such discrimination, you can submit a complaint with the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing by calling them at (800) 884-1684.

- **AB 1586** prohibits insurance discrimination against transgender people by healthcare service plans and certain life and disability insurers. It states that healthcare service plans may not discriminate based on the gender identity of the applicant for coverage. Certain insurance and disability insurers may not refuse to accept an insurance application from a transgender person, or issue or cancel insurance under conditions less favorable to the insured, except for reasons applicable equally to people in general. Generally, these providers may not refuse to provide routine care to a covered person because he or she is transgender.

People discriminated against by healthcare service plans may submit complaints to the Department of Managed Health Care by calling (888) 466-2219. People who have been discriminated against by health insurance or disability insurance companies may submit a complaint to the California Department of Insurance at (800) 927-4357.

- **SB 565** states that counties may not increase the property taxes on real property when ownership of the property is transferred between domestic partners. For example, if one of them owns their home, and names his or her partner as joint owner of the property, the property taxes may not be raised. If the property is owned by them jointly, and one of them dies, the surviving partner becomes the sole owner. The county may not raise the property taxes on the property.

- **SB 973** benefits people in domestic partnerships who retired from state government—or local governments that are part of the Public Employee Retirement System (PERS)—prior to January 1, 2001. These people were not offered the survivor's continuance benefit that was available to married retirees upon retirement, and which slightly increased the monthly retirement check of married retirees. SB 973 makes the survivor continuance benefit available to the state and some local government retirees in domestic partnerships who retired prior to the beginning of 2001. People in this situation can request a recalculation of their monthly retirement check by calling PERS at (888) 225-7377.

LLP Improving Its Services

By Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

Starting in January the Lambda Letters Project is contracting with two vendors who will help us improve our services to you and to the communities we serve.

The first vendor is CapitolTrack, which will provide us with an automated process to help us find bills of importance in all of the issue areas we work on. In the past we have used a much less sophisticated, manual process. To be truthful, previously we have missed finding some important bills. That is less likely to happen with the new service.

CapitolTrack will also manage the bill list on our web page. The list shows the bill number, author, purpose, and current status of each bill we were tracking. It also shows whether Lambda Letters supports or opposes the bills in the list.

In the past we have updated this list once a month, showing the status (where the bill is in the legislative process) at the time the list was being updated. CapitolTrack promises to update the status of the bill every day. So people visiting our website will always be able to see the absolute latest status of each bill on the list. If you would like to see the web page version of our bill list, just go to *www.lambdaletters.org* and click on the Legislative Update link.

We will also be contracting with Capitol WebWorks to manage our e-mail alert process. With their help, our alerts will look much more professional and will be much easier to respond to. Capitol WebWorks will also generate a thank-you note to each person who responds to our alerts.

In addition, Capitol WebWorks will place a link to our alerts on our web page. I will continue to send alerts to the people on our e-mail alert list. But now people who just happen to visit our website will be able to respond to our alerts from there. We hope that these improvements will increase the number of people who respond to our alerts. That, in turn, will increase the mail going to our elected officials. And that will benefit all the communities we serve.

If you would like to get our e-mail alerts, feel free to send a request to me at *boyce.hinman@lambdaletters.org*. Please put the word SUBSCRIBE on the subject line of your message.

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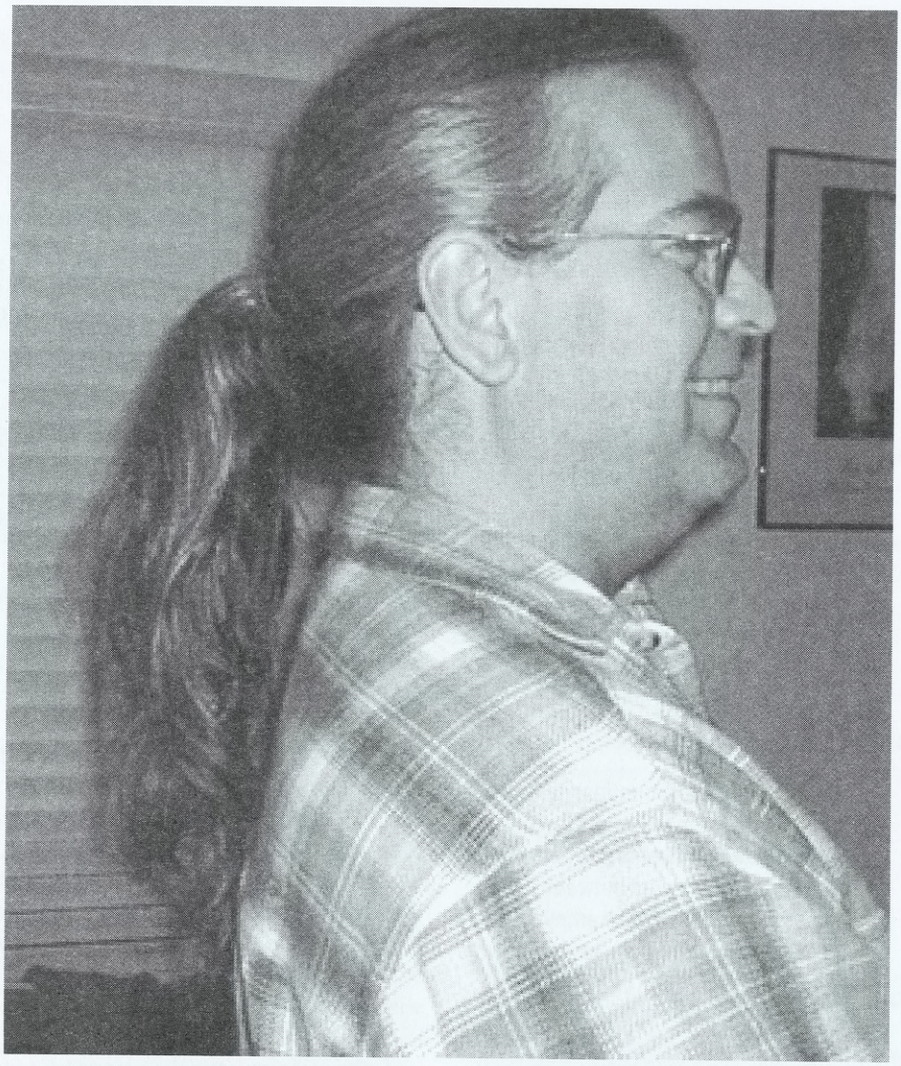
Board Member Shears Locks

Continued from page 1



middle of his back. He decided the time had come to cut his hair for a number of reasons.

"First of all, I'm getting a receding hairline," said Paul, who is 45, "so I figure I don't have many more years left to do this." In addition, Paul's employer was acquired by a larger pharmaceutical company, which then closed it, so Paul is back in the job market and he thinks he'll make a better impression on prospective employers if he cuts his hair.

Another man, who had also grown his hair and donated it, gave Paul the idea to link his gift to a pledge drive for a worthy charity. Paul came to Lambda Letters with the idea, and this is what we've worked out.

Lambda Letters invites you to show your support for Paul's effort by contributing to Lambda Letters—or, because Lambda Letters is committed to diversity, to another worthy organization of your choice. Just send in a check (or a copy of your check if the donation is to another organization) that designates in the memo line that the donation was made "in support of Paul."

Checks for Lambda Letters may be made payable to either Lambda Letters Project (sorry, not tax-deductible but we need this kind of contribution the most) or to Lambda Letters Foundation (tax-deductible but the money could be used for educational purposes only). Please send your checks (or copies of checks you send to other organizations in support of Paul) to the following address:

Lambda Letters Project
3726 Madison Ave., #1
San Diego, CA 92116

We will do a follow-up article in our April newsletter showing an "after" picture of Paul with his new hairdo, and we will let you know the results of the campaign.

Calling All Policy Wonks

Legislative Analysts Needed

By Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

Since its founding, the Lambda Letters Project has depended upon a team of volunteers whom we call legislative analysts. We are now looking for two volunteers: one to be our HIV/AIDS issues legislative analyst and one to be our economic issues legislative analyst.

Our legislative analysts create the articles for our newsletter on each of our featured bills that month. They also create the sample letters that you receive each month in the mail. Each analyst specializes in one of our four—now five—issue areas. For example, the HIV/AIDS legislative analyst does one HIV/AIDS article and one HIV/AIDS sample letter per month. Analysts write their letters and articles on bills that have been approved for inclusion in our bill list by the Lambda Letters Legislative Committee.

Analysts find information about the bills on the web. They can also consult with the authors of the bills we support, who provide background statements with facts and arguments used to draft the newsletter articles and sample letters.

Lambda Letters can train volunteers to find information on the legislature's website and on the Internet in general.

Each analyst spends from three to five hours per month writing their articles and letters. We need people who are willing to become volunteer legislative analysts in the HIV/AIDS area and the area of economic issues.

By volunteering, you will learn some very useful skills. You will also provide invaluable support in the areas of health and economic justice. You can do all this with just three to five hours of work each month.

Won't you join our team? To learn more about this opportunity, please contact me, the LLP chief lobbyist, at (916) 728-1261 or *lambdalp@aol.com*. I look forward to hearing from you.

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People of Color Bills Now Law

By Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

Governor Schwarzenegger did not sign many of the people of color bills that the Lambda Letters Project supported in 2005. We gave him a score of just 33% for the actions he took on bills of importance to people of color—the lowest score we gave him for any of the four areas we cover.

Here are the bills we supported and which he signed:

- **AB 22** establishes the crime of human trafficking for the purposes of forced labor or services, including sexual servitude. Human trafficking is basically just slavery. AB 22 requires restitution to trafficking victims and requires the State Attorney General to make fighting human trafficking a high priority.

- **AB 124** requires state agencies to establish programs to ensure equal access to state jobs, work assignments, and training while basing access to them on merit and non-discrimination. The bill also requires the State Personnel Board to collect employment data about the race, ethnicity, disability, and gender status of state employees.

- **SB 112** establishes important guidelines for the distribution of funds from the Federal Refugee Act to the counties of California. It is an attempt to make sure that the amount of funds received by the counties matches the impact of refugees in the counties on their county budgets.

- **SB 670** expresses the apology of the State of California to those individuals who, from 1929 to 1944, were illegally deported—or coerced into emigrating—to Mexico as a result of the Mexican Repatriation Program. The bill also requires that a plaque be placed and maintained in a public place to commemorate this event. It is estimated that up to 400,000 people of Mexican heritage were illegally forced to move from California to Mexico during the period from 1929 through 1944.

Come to LLP's Annual Meeting This Month

It's almost time again for the annual meeting of the Lambda Letters Project. Our meeting will occur on Saturday, January 21, 2006, at 11 AM. You are cordially invited to attend at the following location:

Shriners Hospital for Children
Seventh Floor Board Room
2425 Stockton Blvd. (between X and Y Streets)
Sacramento, CA 95817

See you there!

- **AB 1142** is a bill that we considered an HIV/AIDS bill. However, it directly affects African-Americans as well. This bill establishes a statewide African-American Initiative to address the disproportionate impact of HIV/AIDS on the health of African-Americans by coordinating prevention and service networks around the state and increasing the capacity of core service providers. The initiative would be implemented in five regional centers. It must be privately funded.

You will hear more about AB 1142 in next month's issue of this newsletter. We will also report to you in the February newsletter on the HIV/AIDS and the women's issue bills signed by the governor.

Washington *v.* SDSU

Continued from page 1

associate professor. Instead of reversing Washington's wrongful termination from the university, however, SDSU officials maligned the EEOC investigator's findings in the media with press releases and public statements. Washington was forced to continue the quest for equitable treatment in a court of law.

Unfortunately, in spite of overwhelming evidence documenting the discrimination and retaliation that she experienced prior to and during her application for tenure and promotion, California Superior Court Judge Jay Bloom defied the evidence and dismissed her case. His decision completely bypassed Washington's claim that she was discriminated against on the basis of sex and race combined. Instead, Judge Bloom ruled that "lack of collegiality" was a legitimate reason for denying her tenure and promotion.

Washington and her attorneys filed an appeal of the judge's decision in July, 2005. They await vindication in the appellate court.

To date, many organizations and political leaders champion Washington's efforts to be reinstated with tenure and promotion at SDSU.

Organizational supporters include WAGE, AAUW-LAF, Feminists Against Academic Discrimination, the NAACP, California Black Faculty Staff Association, the general membership of the National Women's Studies Association and the Women of Color Caucus, Lambda Letters Project, and Sociologists for Women in Society. Elected leaders who support Washington include Congressman Bob Filner (D–Calif.), Senator Christine Kehoe (D–San Diego), San Diego Councilwoman Toni Atkins, and others.

For a list of supporting documentation for Washington's assertions and a list of supporting organizations, visit the American Association of University Women Legal Advocacy Fund website (*www.aauw.org/laf*) and Washington's website (*www.patwashington.org*).

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